



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990  
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

March 13, 2002

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Carl Osaki, Member

RE: Update on the Department of Ecology's Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxin Strategy

**Background and Summary:**

Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxins (PBTs) are associated with a range of adverse human health effects, including effects on the nervous system and reproductive system, and associated developmental and behavioral problems. Due to their developmental state, fetuses and young children are at greatest risk from PBT exposure.

The Board heard from the Department of Ecology on March 14, 2001 on its strategy to reduce the amount of Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxins (PBTs) in the environment. On June 13, 2001 the Board wrote a letter in support of Ecology's PBT strategy to the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee, describing how the PBT reduction strategy is consistent with the Board's work (letter attached). The Legislature allocated funds for the 2001-2003 biennium to Ecology for the PBT strategy.

In the past month the House and Senate heard bills on mercury reduction and education, and on implementing a public health education program to reduce childhood exposure to lead in residential settings. The Board has also received many e-mails over the last six months from citizens concerned about Lake Whatcom mercury levels.

I have asked Mike Gallagher, Ecology's PBT coordinator, to update the Board on Ecology's PBT strategy. One major step DOE has taken is selecting mercury as the first PBT to focus on, due to its widespread use and presence in our environment. DOE's Chemical Action Plan for mercury began in January 2002 and includes:

- identifying current mercury sources and uses,
- analyzing current regulatory and non-regulatory measures,
- identifying mercury reduction options, and
- implementing actions to reduce mercury use and releases.

The Legislature allocated funds to the Department of Health to assist Ecology in strategy implementation and development of chemical action plans and educational programs. I have asked Jim Vanderslice from the Department of Health to update the Board on DOH's role.

**Recommended Board Motion:**

***No action recommended.***

Attachment: June 13, 2001 letter from Linda Lake, WSBOH Chair